2: Hudson E-4, 5 (1936) 1938 RQ2 Kazak RQ2

LARGER POLITICAL UNITS

Local groups were to a great extent independent, or at least autonomous, politically. They were nominally subject to the khans or sultans who at different times succeeded in gaining a measure of supremacy in different parts of the steppe. The khanates, however, were not, except for brief periods under an exceptional ruler, strong centralized states. Rather they were a combination of tribal confederacy and feudal union, the constituent parts of which were continually tending to break off and form new groupings. Levshin writes:[12]

". . . [leurs] chefs . . . ne commandent pas, sans bien des exceptions, à des races, à des tribus entières, ni même à des sections de tribus, mais à des bandes, à des partis souvent composés de gens appartenant à des sections de tribus, de races ou même de hordes différentes.

Levshin uses "tribu" and "race" in the sense of the larger genealogical uru strata. His statement further indicates the lack of correlation between genealogical and political groupings.

It is clear from the above that the ordas themselves were not political units, at least at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Meyendorff[13] says of the Great Orda that it had no one ruler but was broken up into a number of independent sections each with its own khan.[14]

Such khans held their position partly by virtue of descent from the heirs of the empire of Chingis but more particularly and practically by the extent to which they were able to rally around themselves the great cattle owners, the leaders of the auls. Here there was a clash of interests. The khans were eager to increase their authority over the local chiefs while the latter sought to retain the highest possible degree of independence.[15] This conflict expressed itself in frequent transfers of allegiance on the part of the aul leaders to other khans.[16] To a certain extent the relationship between the khans and the local chiefs was comparable to that between the chiefs and their own dependents in so far as there existed reciprocal obligations of protection on one hand and service on the other. The analogy must not, however, be pushed too far because the dependents of the local leaders were seldom sufficiently strong to defend their own interests.

The more important khans surrounded themselves with a considerable court consisting of their relatives, councillors, bodyguards, servants, and slaves.[17] It is interesting to note here that Atkinson[18] observes that every khan also had his merchant and mullah, both of whom were very important personages about the court. Some of the khans entered actively or through their agents into commercial relations with the settled regions.[19] Traveling

[12] *Idem*, 395–96.
[13] *Voyage d'Orenbourg*, 53.
[14] See also Howorth, *History of the Mongols*, 2: 674.
[15] Togzhanov, *O Kazakskom Feodalizme*, 128–29.
[16] See also Levshin, *Description des hordes*, 393.
[17] Asfendiarov, *Istoriia Kazakstana*, 82.
[18] *Oriental and Western Siberia*, 451.
[19] Asfendiarov, *Istoriia Kazakstana*, 94.

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of Abul Mahmet. When the interpreter Urazlin arrived, sent him by Nepluev, Abul Mahmet frankly admitted the reason for his sudden return from the outskirts of Orenburg and then confessed that fear had made him give his son as hostage to Galdan, after which he swore loyalty to Empress Elizabeth. It was in this same year of 1742 that Barak, the powerful Kazak sultan, swore the oath to the Russian government for the first time, at the same time as Abul Mahmet. He was the leader of a large part of the Middle Horde, and his subjects gave him the title of khan.

As an independent sovereign, he sent deputies to Orenburg after the oath with the request that they be directed to the court, so that they might present his respects to the Empress in person and in his name.

Several months later he showed how insincere this submission was. His deputies were presented to Elizabeth, allowed to kiss her hand, and were overwhelmed with favors and gifts. He himself was sent, through the government of Orenburg, a letter (1)

1. This letter was presented March 24, 1743.

and a golden saber with an inscription to him. Nepluev, who had never seen Barak and knew that he had had no previous relations with Russia, felt obligated to deliver the marks of favor from the Empress, and with this intention he sent him a messenger, who left with his ambassadors to invite him to come to Orenburg.

[200] The proud sultan was angry because the letter and the saber had not been brought by his own embassy and ordered various rude things said to Nepluev's officer, sending him back without having seen him. The primary cause of the gross insolence can only be attributed to Barak's blind pride, and the secondary one can be considered to be the fact that no other gift except the saber accompanied the letter.

Sultan Ablai, who had languished about a year as a prisoner of the Dzungars, was finally liberated in the spring of 1742, thanks to the efforts of Major Müller, who had been sent to Galdan.